**--MEDIA RELEASE**

**For Immediate Distribution**

**Women with Disabilities Victoria are losing 48% of their funding.**

Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV) are losing 48% of their funding, resulting in a loss of 36% of their staff, this includes 19 women and non-binary people with disability.

In a crucial time for the disability community, where Royal Commissions, inquiries and reviews have exposed the extreme inequities experienced by women with disability, it is unfathomable that the Commonwealth Government have chosen to no longer fund WDV’s work.

Women with disabilities have a right to have their say about government policies that will affect them. Not continuing to fund the very organisation with this remit makes no sense. WDV is calling on Minister Bill Shorten and Minister Amanda Rishworth for WDV’s funding to be re-instated so their critical work can continue after June 2024.

WDV is a disabled people's organisation, representing over 1000 members who are women with disabilities. WDV employs 53 staff, a majority of these are also women with disabilities.

The funding loss will have a devastating impact on the community; Regional Hubs in Bendigo, Barwon, Moira and Melbourne’s Outer East will disband, leaving many women with disabilities without the monthly meetings they have come to relish and rely on. For many, their only social connection and sole source of disability advocacy and pride will be gone.

WDV’s Enabling Women Leadership programs are also being axed after 10 years empowering women with disabilities and transforming lives.

Recently retiring from her role as a hub leader in Barwon, Deb Haygarth says “I am shattered to hear of the funding loss. Our hub met monthly for nearly 10 years. It was our safe-haven to share, learn and discuss issues that affect us. We encouraged inclusion and self-advocacy, as being a woman with a disability is not easy. We strived to empower ourselves and rise above our hardships together. This will be a huge loss for the women in this hub.”

WDV CEO, Nadia Mattiazzo, wrote to Minister Rishworth after being notified of the funding cut, saying “the government says it is committed to supporting women with disabilities to gain meaningful employment. How can I explain to our staff that at the end of June, they will have no job?”.

She continues “we know the Federal Government has acknowledged the additional barriers that women with disabilities experience in gaining employment. We know that women with disabilities experience higher rates of domestic violence than many other sectors of the community and we know that for many women, finding and retaining consistent and long-term employment is a critical factor to escaping domestic violence, reducing isolation, and becoming a part of their community.”

WDV calls for immediate action to cover its funding shortfall to continue their Community Inclusion and Women’s Empowerment program and their work to strengthen existing partnerships with women's health services in order to reduce barriers that women with disabilities face in accessing health services.

Nadia says “we see this as a huge underestimate from government regarding the investment that is needed to ensure real community inclusion of women and non-binary people with disability. This is a huge missed opportunity.”

Please click the link below to send an email to Minister Shorten and Minister Rishworth. WDV urgently needs your support to call on the government to ensure the continuation of this critical work.

[https://wdvfundingcampaign.good.do/wdvfundingcampaign/](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwdvfundingcampaign.good.do%2Fwdvfundingcampaign%2F&data=05%7C02%7Celysia.johnston%40wdv.org.au%7C921c44535a8d4e31554b08dc8041554d%7Cfa4a21576e064579b830b92258ec29d1%7C0%7C0%7C638526265314844034%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=LrQAq7PHFO3jt5iIgfBcxOBGGdH9Ea7xFYxd0X%2F0G40%3D&reserved=0)

 ***Ends***

**For media enquiries please contact:**

**Elysia Johnston (she/her)**

Phone: (03) 9286 7814

Email: elysia.johnston@wdv.org.au